

WHEN WAR BECOMES PEACE: Obama's Nobel Peace Prize Win Leads to Formal Investigation of Award

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, February 02, 2012

Associated Press 2 February 2012

Theme: [History](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

STOCKHOLM, Sweden (AP) Nobel Peace Prize officials were facing a formal inquiry over accusations they have drifted away from the prize's original selection criteria by choosing such winners as President Barack Obama, as the nomination deadline for the 2012 awards closed Wednesday.

The investigation comes after persistent complaints by a Norwegian peace researcher that the original purpose of the prize was to diminish the role of military power in international relations.

If the Stockholm County Administrative Board, which supervises foundations in Sweden's capital, finds that prize founder Alfred Nobel's will is not being honored, it has the authority to suspend award decisions going back three years - though that would be unlikely and unprecedented, said Mikael Wiman, a legal expert working for the county.

Obama won in 2009, Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo won in 2010, and last year the award was split between Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberian activist Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman of Yemen.

For this year's award, Russian human rights activist Svetlana Gannushkina, jailed former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and Cuban rights activists Oswaldo Paya and Yoani Sanchez are among the candidates who have been publicly announced by those who nominated them.

The secretive prize committee doesn't discuss nominations - which have to be postmarked by Feb. 1 to be valid - but stresses that being nominated doesn't say anything about a candidate's chances.

Fredrik Heffermehl, a prominent researcher and critic of the selection process, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that "Nobel called it a prize for the champions of peace."

"And it's indisputable that he had in mind the peace movement, i.e. the active development of international law and institutions, a new global order where nations safely can drop national armaments," he said

Especially after World War II, the prize committee, which is appointed by the Norwegian Parliament, has widened the scope of the prize to include environmental, humanitarian and other efforts, he said.

For example, in 2007 the prize went to climate activist Al Gore and the U.N.'s panel on climate change, and in 2009 the committee cited Obama for "extraordinary efforts" to boost international diplomacy.

"Do you see Obama as a promoter of abolishing the military as a tool of international affairs?" Heffermehl asked rhetorically.

Nobel, a Swedish industrialist and inventor, gave only vague guidelines for the peace prize in his 1895 will, saying it should honor "work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses."

Nobel said the peace prize should be awarded by a Norwegian committee, and the other Nobel Prizes by committees in Sweden. The two Scandinavian nations were in a union at the time.

Geir Lundestad, the nonvoting secretary of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, dismissed Heffermehl's claims.

"Fighting climate change is definitely closely related to fraternity between nations. It even concerns the survival of some states," he told AP.

Still, the County Administrative Board decided to send a letter to the Stockholm-based Nobel Foundation, which manages the prize assets, requesting a formal response to the allegations.

"We have no basis to suggest that they haven't managed it properly. But we want to investigate it," Wiman said.

"The prize committee must always adjust its rules to today's society," he said. "But peace work has to be at the core - it can't deviate too much from that," Wiman said.

The peace prize and the Nobel awards in chemistry, physics, medicine, literature and economics are always handed out Dec. 10, the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death

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